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CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY. IV.

THE STATE.

"THE conception of the state," says Bluntschli,¹ "has to do with the nature and essential characteristics of actual states. The idea or ideal of the state presents a picture, in the splendor of imaginary perfection, of the state as not yet realized, but to be striven for. The conception of the state can be discovered only by history; the idea of the state is called up by philosophical speculation."

No one will be apt to expect from Jesus an historical study of the conception of the state. He was a student neither of history nor of politics. But there is no lack of facts that go to prove that men since his day have looked to him as furnishing an ideal of statecraft almost as much as of morals and religion.

I.

If one looks to the early Christian communities for their political attitude, one is immediately struck with the prevalent policy of *laissez faire*. It is true that the hospitable Jason² of Thessalonica suffered at the hands of his fellow-citizens for harboring those who were acting "contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus," and it is by no means impossible that others of the Christian community may also have become involved.³ But both he and they were the victims of a religious persecution that sought to justify itself by the use of terms treasonable in sound. The attitude which the churches ordinarily held to the Roman administration was that seen in the anti-revolutionary advice given by Paul to the Christians at Corinth—"let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called"⁴—and in the more specific teaching of the later

¹ *The Theory of the State*, Eng. trans., p. 15.

² Acts 17: 1-9.

³ 1 Thess. 2: 14.

⁴ 1 Cor. 7: 20. The attitude of Paul himself is seen in his appeal to Cæsar (Acts

epistles, to "pray for kings and all that are in high places,"¹ and to be "subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ; or to governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well"—to "fear God, honor the king."² This law-abiding spirit of the early Christians is further evidenced not only by similar appeals of Clement of Rome³ and of Polycarp,⁴ but also by the well-known incident reported by Pliny⁵ to Trajan of their giving up their religious common meal in order not to appear guilty of breaking the imperial law against sodalities.

But by the time of Justin Martyr⁶ we find the Christian expressions concerning the kingdom of God less carefully guarded, and a misconception of their teachings growing easy. Probably these misconceptions were not altogether unfounded. For it would be but natural if the persecutions through which the church passed should lead it to emphasize the coming kingdom. To Tertullian the conversion of the Cæsars seemed as unlikely as the elevation of a Christian to the imperial throne,⁷ while Origen replies to the sneer of Celsus that Christians had best undertake the management of the state, "In whatever city we are, we have another country, which is founded by the word of God."⁸ From this time on the more ascetic bodies of Christians seem to have withdrawn themselves as far as possible from civil duties, while the more moderate party was content to endure the state as a necessary evil.

25:10) as well as in his use of his Roman citizenship as a means of escaping the designs of the Jews (Acts 16:37 ; 22:25).

¹ 1 Tim. 2:2.

² 1 Peter 2:13, 17.

³ Epistle to Corinthians, chs. 60, 61.

⁴ Epistle to Philipians ch. 12. Other instances are given in SANDAY and HEADLAM, *Romans* p. 372.

⁵ PLINY, *Epistles*, bk. x., ch. 97. See also RAMSAY, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, ch. x. The absence of revolutionary tendencies is also evidenced by the tradition preserved by Hegesippus and Eusebius (iii., 19, 20) that Domitian sent to Palestine for the relatives of Jesus on the ground that they were planning a revolt, but finding them innocent peasants he sent them back.

⁶ For instance, *Apology*, ii., 58.

⁷ *Apology*, ch. 21.

⁸ See NEANDER, *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, I., 272.

The new political significance given the church by Constantine and his successors placed the political import of Christianity in an entirely new light. On the one hand the Christians found themselves in unexampled political power, while on the other, especially in the West where the misery of the fifth century began to be felt, pagan writers charge the misfortunes of the time to the new Christian rulers. In meeting this charge, Augustine rightly enough emphasizes the evil political tendencies to be seen under the heathen emperors, but in the *De Civitate Dei* also defends Christian teaching from the charge of being inimical to the state. "Let them give us," he urges, "such warriors as the Christian doctrines require they should be; . . . such subjects; . . . such kings and judges; such payers and receivers of tribute as they ought to be according to the Christian doctrine; and would they still venture to assert that this doctrine is opposed to the state? Nay, would they not rather confess without hesitation, that, if it were followed, it would prove the salvation of the state." Yet Augustine does not attempt to construct any theory of the state from scriptural data. He distinctly turns away¹ from such an endeavor. The City of God is not an ideal commonwealth, but a heavenly, an eschatological reign of peace which is to be expected, but not enjoyed in this age. Priests and prophets had foretold it, the saints of Israel had prayed to see it; the sacred books were full of its ceaseless conflict with its evil counterpart, that fruit of Adam's fall, the earthly state. And before this glorious millennial age could come, this enemy must forever disappear.

With the revival of the Roman Empire by Charlemagne, and especially with the later attempts at a dual empire during the Middle Ages, the theoretical side of politics became increasingly dependent upon scriptural supports. It was characteristic of the exegetical processes of the time that such support should often be gained by a sort of allegorizing process from expressions utterly lacking in political content. Not to plunge into the mysteries of Daniel and the Apocalypse, nothing is more fundamental in the

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, bk. 19, ch. 17.

argument one meets constantly in mediæval documents concerned with the bitter struggle between pope and emperor, than the appeal to the two swords.¹ It is impossible to discover who for the first time used this remarkable argument to establish the need of a spiritual and temporal head for the state. By the time it is used by the first combatants of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it has acquired universal assent as inspired teaching, and the only matter of concern is whether both swords were given to Peter, thus proving the superiority of the pope; or one each to Peter and John, thus establishing the coördinate power of the emperor. By the time of the formularies found in the *Sachsenspiegel*, so far as the Holy Roman Empire is concerned, it has become the epitome of mediæval political theory. It is not to our purpose to notice the extraordinary logic of the vigorous letter of Henry IV. which accompanied the equally vigorous letter of the German bishops to Gregory VII.,² but it cannot be overlooked that not only does Henry appeal to the words of Peter³ and Paul,⁴ but he also expressly states that the royal authority, like the papal, is the gift of Jesus Christ. Frederick Barbarossa argues quite as directly and forcibly.⁵

These are by no means all the texts used by the mediæval writers and combatants. As Bryce says, "Every passage was seized upon when submission to the powers that be is enjoined, every instance cited where obedience had actually been rendered to imperial officials, a special emphasis being laid on the sanction which Christ himself had given to Roman dominion by pacifying the world through Augustus, by being born at the time of the taxing, by paying tribute to Cæsar [?], by saying to Pilate,

¹ Luke 22: 38. And they said, Lord, behold here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

² *Monumenta Germaniæ Historica*, Leges II., 44 sq.

³ 1 Pet. 2: 17. ⁴ Gal. 1: 8.

⁵ For instance, in his remarkable proclamation following the affair at Besançon: "Cumque per electionem principum a solo Deo regnum et imperium nostrum sit, qui in passione Christi filii sui duobus gladiis necessariis regendum orbem subjecit, cumque Petrus apostolus hac doctrina mundum informaverit: 'Deum timete, regem honorificate.'" etc. For this and other illustrations from mediæval thought, see MATHEWS, *Select Mediæval Documents*. Bluntschli reprints (*Theory of the State*, p. 40 n.) the sentence from the *Sachsenspiegel* mentioned above.

'Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above.'"¹ It is not too much to say that mediæval political theory is one branch of the all-embracing theology of the times. Not merely within the circle of imperial ideas, but generally, "the state was held to be an organization willed and created by God."² Thus Thomas Aquinas, although he does not greatly appeal to Scripture, regards the political state not as did Augustine as a consequence of the fall, but as a necessary part of the world's life. Law in his estimation was an outflowing of the divine nature.

But the attempt to discover a divine and scriptural basis for the state has been by no means limited to the Middle Ages. There have always been Savonarolas who would make Christ king in their cities, and Cromwells who would establish a kingdom of saints. Throughout the fierce struggles that gave birth to modern Europe and erected in America the United States, armies have repeatedly alternated drill with prayer and fighting with catechizing. One has but to recall such careers as those of Calvin and Zwingli, William of Orange and Winthrop; such extravagances as those at Münster; such reigns as that of James II. of England; such hereditary hatreds as that between the north and south of Ireland; such legislation as that of Massachusetts Bay, to feel at once that politics have always been profoundly affected by theologies.

But after all, few if any of the theologico-political thinkers of the past have troubled to separate the teaching of Jesus from the general teaching of both Old and New Testaments. It may very well be that in this failure to distinguish, not only between the history of the Jews and the teachings of Christianity, but also between the teaching of Jesus and that of the apostles, men have lost some of the distinction that appears between the aims of Jesus and those of the apostles, as well as between his ideal and their more or less incomplete attempts at realizing such an ideal.

¹ *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 113. Dante (*De Monarchia*) is probably the best representative of this mediæval political theology from the side of the empire.

² BLUNTSCHLI, p. 57.

II.

Jesus nowhere gives systematic teaching in regard to politics. His attitude towards the state and political relations is to be seen, if at all, (1) in his own life, (2) in specific statement, (3) in general comparisons and implications.

1. As regards his own life, it is very evident that he obeyed the local and imperial governments under which he lived, and that he distinctly refused to be made a governor or a king, or in any way to be involved in political revolution.¹ While it is, of course, in the main true that this attitude of conformity was due to the conditions which governed his work as a religious teacher, it is none the less probable that in it there was a recognition of the necessity and the rightful claims of the state.

2. The principles which he enunciates are very general and scattered. Nowhere have we anything like the fullness and the explicitness that mark his teachings in regard to marriage and divorce. The most celebrated text² "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," is rather an avoidance of specific teaching than an enunciation of a principle. The position in which Jesus found himself precluded any unequivocal answer.³ That was why his opponents asked the question. His answer, therefore, was one that might be interpreted either favorably or unfavorably according to the conception his opponents held as to whether or not Cæsar really owned the coins. Once grant (as the account would lead us to suppose they did grant) that "the image and superscription" on the coin implied the sovereignty of Cæsar, and the reply of Jesus would of necessity pronounce the payment of taxes legitimate.⁴ Deny that implication and his reply says nothing of the law. It is, therefore, obvious that any wide application of this text to

¹ John 6:15; 18:36; Acts 1:5 *sq.*

² Matthew 22:18-22.

³ The taxes were a constant cause of revolt. See JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:1:1-6; 20:5:2; Acts 5:37.

⁴ That the effigy was regarded by the Jews as implying sovereignty is clear from the fact in the revolt against Hadrian they restamped the Roman coins. See MADDEN, *Coins of the Jews*, 176, 203, and RENAN, *Life of Jesus* (Am. ed., 1895), 337 *n.*

the exigencies of politics must first of all presuppose the sovereign rights of the ruler. Besides, it is clear that in the mind of Jesus the emphasis was upon the thought of rendering to God the things that were His. The entire reply was a rebuke to their insidious quibbling.

If, however, Jesus be credited with something more than an *ad hominem* argument, it is possible to go a step farther and discover in these words something like a genuine political principle. The Jews by using the coins—for we waive as trifling the question as to whether such coins were actually in existence—in so far were served by the Roman government. They, therefore, owed it some service in return. This service was the payment of taxes. But it will not do to press this, and it is much safer to say that in these words Jesus lays down no principle as to the righteousness or unrighteousness of any form of government than to plead them either as an excuse for submission to tyranny or as an incentive to a struggle for independence.

Hardly more direct is their application to the relations of church and state. Dispite the use made of them to lay "the foundation of spiritual as distinct from temporal power, thus making firm the base of true liberalism and true civilization,"¹ it is self-evident that Jesus was not arguing in regard to a state church or any kindred subject, but was calling his questioners back to a sense of their duties to God. In the light of what has been said it seems by no means clear that Jesus would exclude obedience to law from the duties of a religious man.

In Matthew 17:27 we have another instance in which he apparently submitted to the demands of the tax collector and even justified it by the aid of a miracle. But even if one were to reject the miraculous element here contained as inharmonious with the other miraculous elements of the New Testament, it would by no means follow that even in this text we have data for political teaching. The tax which he so paid was not a political tax, but a religious levy for the support of the temple at Jerusalem.² It

¹ RENAN, *Life of Jesus* (Am. ed., 1895), 338.

² EDERSHEIM, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II., 111-113. See also Exodus 30:11 sq.; Neh. 10:32 sq. The Mishna has a separate treatise on the subject.

is true that Jesus still submitted to an existing authority, albeit ecclesiastical rather than political, but even here according to the narrative, not altogether without certain limitations. At any rate, the illustration would far better serve as an argument for tithes than for taxes. But the whole incident reads quite as much as anything else like a rebuke for the over-zealous haste with which Peter promised to pay the temple tax. It is a most astonishing exegesis that finds in it an argument for freeing the clergy from taxation!

More distinct is the answer given by Jesus to the well meant boast of Pilate¹ that he had the power of punishing or acquitting: "Thou wouldst have no authority against me, except it were given thee from above." At the first glance it would appear as if these words are to be taken according to their historical interpretation, and so to commit Jesus to the theory of the divine right of kings, not to mention the whole mass of pusillanimity and casuistry known as the doctrine of Passive Obedience. But it seems somewhat strange to think of Jesus at this supreme hour setting forth a political theory. It is much more natural to regard these words as a part of his philosophy of providence.² They do indeed justify Pilate as a judge, and express submission to a government as to any fact of society, but they by no means make the right of kings any more divine than a myriad other rights. The song of Browning,

"God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world,"

would come far nearer expressing the attitude of Jesus than the sermons of Bishop Berkeley.

3. Nor when we pass from the search for definite statements to a consideration of the implications and the comparisons of the teachings of Jesus do we gain any more definite results. He frequently uses certain phases of royal life to illustrate his teachings: the kingdom of God in some respects he said was like a would-be king who had rebellious subjects;³ or a king who gave a marriage supper to his son, only to find himself insulted;⁴ or a king

¹ John 19: 11.

³ Luke 19: 11 sq.

² Compare Matthew 6: 25-34.

⁴ Matthew 22: 2.

who was more merciful than one of his subjects;¹ while the misfortunes that come upon a kingdom torn by civil war, furnished him arguments for proving his own innocence of complicity with Satan.² These comparisons, coupled with the absence of any serious³ criticism of royalty, make it safe to say, that while we are lacking in definite political teaching emanating from Jesus, we cannot maintain to the contrary, that he regarded government as an evil. But his kingdom was indeed not of this world,⁴ and these comparisons yield no data for generalization.

In the light of these facts it is certainly a strange use of language to speak of the words of Jesus as those of a teacher of politics, and the Sermon on the Mount as a political document.⁵ It is true that the teachings there contained, if once carried out, will, as Augustine protested, produce good men and therefore in so far, good citizens. And it is by no means difficult so to use language as to make Jesus one of the long line of victims upon the altar of political reform. Was not the treasurer of his little society of a dozen men a type of the "boddler" who, having made what he could from the proposed kingdom, sold out its king? And did not Jesus himself perish as a revolutionist—a king of the Jews? But, after all, such a view is a tribute to its propounder's homiletical ingenuity rather than to his understanding of the real life and significance of Jesus. If he were indeed essentially a political reformer or idealist, is it not an astonishing thing that he should have left no more teachings in regard to the state than these scattered, and on the whole, obscure texts? Even the apostles gave more political teaching than he.

¹ Matthew 18:23 *sq.*

² Mark 3:24; Matthew 12:25 *sq.*

³ For no one except a fanatic would see in the somewhat cutting reference to the luxury of courts (Matt. 11:8; Luke 7:25) anything opposed to monarchy as such. Nor do the references to trials before kings and judges (Matt. 10:18) imply any opposition to the institutions they represent.

⁴ John 18:36:

⁵ So, if we can understand his position, HERRON, *The Christian Society*, p. 51. "It [The Sermon on the Mount] is in no sense a sermon, least of all a discourse on individual piety, but a political document, given on a political occasion, as truly as the Great Charter or the Declaration of Independence." But it is possible that the author

III.

Was Jesus then an anarchist ?

The question is absurd if one means by anarchy the philosophy of dynamite and terror. But this, of course, is only a caricature of a far more tenable political philosophy. Proudhon's "anarchic government" was to be no more full of violence than the "natural" state of Rousseau. The name has unfortunate associations, but, at least as the name of a philosophy, may stand for an ideal condition, which is to be the expression of law. But this law is no longer as with Thomas Aquinas the outflow of the divine nature, but is rather the expression of a human nature that is instinctively to do that which is good not only in the eyes of its possessor, but also in those of his neighbors.

"Anarchy is not inconsistent with association, but only with enforced association. It means simply a state of society in which no one is bound or obliged to do anything (whether to associate with others or anything else); it is not opposed to order, but only to enforced order; nor to rule, but only to obligatory rule. In other words it is synonymous with liberty. Under such a system, individuals would simply be left free to do as they chose; compulsion would disappear; the only bonds in society would be moral bonds."¹

There could be no inherent objection to calling Jesus this sort of anarchist if his teachings were sufficiently distinct to justify the use of any political term. It might, indeed, by its sensational connections attract new attention to his words. It would not be the first time novelty has done yeoman service as

does not expect these words to be taken literally, but rather as impassioned rhetoric to express the fact that the teachings of Jesus have a bearing upon social questions. It is to be regretted that so earnest an effort as is made in this and other works of Professor Herron should be disfigured by a disregard of the necessity of sober statement.

¹ SALTER, *Anarchy or Government*, p. 7. Two other opinions may be requoted from this little work : "In heaven nothing like what we call government on earth can exist."—CHANNING, *Works*, p. 361. "Strict anarchy may be the highest conceivable grade of perfection of social existence; but, if all men spontaneously did justice and loved mercy, it is plain that all swords might advantageously be turned into ploughshares, and that the occupation of judges and police would be gone."—HUXLEY, *Essays*, I. 39.

truth. And it must be admitted that at first glance there is something of similarity between Jesus' conception of his new social order and this benign and harmless political metaphysics, which, like a sheep in wolf's clothing, is doing its best by masquerading under an ill-omened name to startle the world into believing it of practical importance. But unless our conception of the teaching of Jesus is altogether incorrect, not only would it be ill-advised to use the term anarchy in speaking of his teaching, but it would commit him to notions of government and society, which, if we may judge from his words, were utterly absent from his thought. For instance, much of the plausibility of this irenic anarchy depends upon the conception of the state as a mere coercive regulator of individuals who need an umpire to decide and enforce the extent to which each must yield to the other in the interest of social peace. Once conceive of the state as something more than this agent of coercion, and the most captivating argument of the anarchist weakens before some utopia of the socialist pure and simple. Now the words of Jesus should not be forced to train with those of either school. His thought is not political. He stands no more committed to an idea of government as a keeper of the peace than to the idea of government as a sort of executive committee of a democracy. We may say that in certain particulars his teaching would agree with either conception. But the point of its agreement is not within the sphere of speculative or practical politics, but within that of individual duties and social regeneration. One can no more call him an anarchist because he gives no political teaching than he can call him a surgeon because he never speaks of medicines.

And, indeed, his silence in itself is opposed to all anti-governmental opinions. For it is not of the same sort as his silence with regard to social infamies. In such cases as slavery and prostitution, his silence was possible because in his general teachings are contained forces which would inevitably bring about their destruction. But, in the case of government, it is by no means true that the fundamental principles of his ideal social

order are destructive. If we once more look at the matter historically, it becomes evident that in the interpretation of his own age his silence was not regarded as anarchistic; and in later times it has been true that while some peoples who have come under his direct influence have developed democracies, in no case of importance, at least, is it true that they have been hostile to governments as such. The Puritan was no less a champion of strong government than the Cavalier. The contrary interpretation which was placed upon his teachings by some Christians of different centuries was clearly sporadic and due to a misapprehension of the kingdom of God. That the Christians of the early centuries regarded their faith as inimical to the Roman empire may be true, but even in this case, in a singularly materialistic fashion, they expected that in the place of that empire which was persecuting them, or which was going down before the barbarians because of its vice, there would come, not anarchy, but another kingdom which would be genuinely monarchical—the everlasting kingdom of their Christ. In other words, the very misconception of the Christians of the third and fourth centuries of the teachings of Jesus in regard to the kingdom is an evidence that they did not regard these teachings as anarchistic.

And, indeed, the whole philosophy of Christ in regard to man, both real and ideal, points to the same conclusion. The union which he holds up is not that of an aggregation, but is organic. The kingdom of God is the union of brothers over whom God himself is to reign. Mankind is not composed of insulated individuals, but of social beings, who seek not a convenient association for exchange and other economic purposes, but an absorbing and organic union with one another as members of a family. If Jesus bids his disciples not to be called *rabbi*,¹ it is not only that he may teach them lessons of humility, but also because he himself is their Master. Indeed, within the little group of his immediate followers there is a hint of there having been some organization.² To imagine that Jesus was so

¹ Matt. 23 : 8.

² This may be conjectured from the arrangement of the names in the lists of the

visionary as to imagine that the unregulated promptings of a community are sufficient to insure order, is to forget his feeding of the five thousand,¹ his regard for the conventionalities of ceremonial purifications;² his unwillingness to interfere with the the work of John;³ his systematic evangelization of Palestine;⁴ the repeated counsel and instruction which he showered upon his followers. These facts, it is true, do not point towards a theory of the state, but they certainly suggest a mind that was eminently ordered and respectful of formal rather than instinctive order.

IV.

Was then Jesus a socialist, a monarchist, a democrat? Again must it be said he was neither. He stands committed to no political teaching. In this particular he is unique among the great teachers who have affected the West. Others, like Plato and Mahomet, have yielded to the temptation of systematic thought or circumstances and have weighted their philosophy and their religion with political teachings that were either so ideal as to be impracticable or so practicable as to be soon outgrown. Jesus felt the force of the same temptation.⁵ It was not through apathy that he refused to enter the sphere of political thought. The people demanded it, the professional teachers expected it, the Romans in name punished him for it. But with that concentration and foresight that continually grows upon the student of his life, he held himself sternly to the duties of a preacher of religion and morals. It was enough when he had shown the fatherly monarchy of God, and the fraternal obedience of men. As in the case of the family, the details through which this conception of society should be approximated would be determined by the spirit of brotherliness and the exigencies of circumstance and time.

apostles (Matt. 10: 2-4; Mark 3: 16-19; Luke 6: 14-16). In all accounts the same names (so far as they can be identified) occur in the same group of four, and the first of each of these groups is always Peter, Philip, James.

¹ Mark 6: 14.

² Mark 1: 44.

³ John 4: 1-3.

⁴ Mark 1: 35-37. Compare his sending out of his disciples for the same purpose.

⁵ Matt. 4: 8.

If men desire the sanction of Jesus for any form of government, they must appeal not to specific sayings, but to this spirit which is the basis of the ideal order. The test of a theory or a fact of government must not be Does Jesus teach it? but Does it make for that fraternity that is his ideal for society? Such a tendency is conceivably the result of almost any form of political organization. Jesus himself most naturally used the monarchical vocabulary of his people just as Plato used that of the Athenian aristocratic democracy. But he thereby stands not at all committed to monarchy as the ultimate form of government. Yet for that reason the democrat and the socialist cannot claim his exclusive authority. For it cannot be too strongly emphasized that Jesus was not a political thinker, and that he has left no divinely sanctioned form for political association. A government is Christian, not because it is of this or that form, but because it is attempting to realize the principles of fraternity and love that underlie the entire social teachings of Jesus. If it be objected that no such government can exist, that force and not love is still the essential element of the state, the only rational reply is one of doubt that is itself hope. For it may well be doubted whether the teachings of Jesus are not more operative in politics than men think; and it may well be hoped that so long as this possibility lasts, that, as the conceptions of man and society and the family have more and more come under the sway of the thought of Jesus, so too politics are approaching, be it never so slowly, that justice and altruism which are to be the world's when once its kingdoms have become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ.

And one dares to write thus in the face of Armenia and American municipalities!

SHAILER MATHEWS.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.